116, 162

"Mr. Brough Smyth makes the following statement (II. p. 387): 'The women were seldom accompanied by many children; but there is no reason to suppose that they were less prolific than people of other races.' With the latter part of his statement we have no cause to differ in so far, of course, as it relates to the aborigines before contact with civilization; but in support of the first part of his statement we can find no evidence. It does not follow that becasue the children are not always mentioned, that there were none. In the three interviews narrated below it will be seen children predominated over the adults. Péron states (ch. xii. pp. 225-226), 'As soon as they [a family of aborigines] saw us, they ... doubled their pace in order to rejoin us. Their number was increased by a young girl of from sixteen to seventeen years of age, by another little boy of from four to five years, and by a little girl of three to four years. This family was composed therefore of nine people, the elders being apparently the father and mother: the young man and his wife appeared to us to be at the same time "époux et frère"; we considered the young girl to be the sister of the latter; the four children must have been those of the young man and the young woman.' La Billardière (II. ch. x. p. 37) encountered a party of forty-two savages, 'seven of whom were men, eight women, the rest appeared to be their children; and among these we observed several marriageable girls,' and further on (ibid. p. 54) he says: 'We had scarcely gone a mile before we found ourselves in the

midst of eigth-and-forty natives; ten men, fourteen women, and twenty-four children, among whom we observed as many girls as boys.'"

"There seems [100] little doubt that they lived upon all the animals they could kill. Davis says (p. 413): 'With respect to the general nature of their food, that depends in a great measure on their locality. The western portion of the island is more mountainous, wet and thickly wooded than the rest; kangaroos are more difficult to obtain, and the natives live, consequently, more on shell-fish, than on the eastern coast; these are principally the haliotis and crayfish, which they obtain by diving.... The tribes in the interior subsist upon kangaroos, wallaby, and opossums; more particularly the latter.' Where Bass and Flinders landed they 'fell in with many huts along the shores of the river, ...but with fewer heaps of mussel shells lying near them. The natives of this place probably draw the principal part of their food from the woods; the bones of small animals such as opossums, squirrels, kangaroo-rats, and bandicoots, were numerous round their deserted fire-places' (Collins, p. 188). Péron found in one place, near some huts, remains of kangaroos and birds (ch. xii. p. 243), and Milligan says (Beacon, p. 26), 'They live chiefly on animal food; the kangaroo, wallaby, bandicoot, kangaroo-rat, the opossum, and the wombat; nearly every bird and bird's egg that could be procured, and in the case of tribes near the sea, cray-fish and shell-fish, formed the staple articles of their diet.' 'The craw-fish and oysters, if immediately on the coast, are their principal food. Opossums and kangaroos may be said to be their chief support' (Widowson, p. 190). Cook found they were fond of birds (Third Voy. Bk. I. ch. vi.), and Flinders mentions

that meeting with a native and offering him a black swan, 'it was accepted with rapture' (sec. iv. p. 187). 'All of them were particularly fond of the flesh of the deadly snakes and the guana' (Melville, p. 346). Backhouse mentions that the natives so abhor fat that 'they even reject bread cut with a buttery knife,' and on some soup being offered them, 'they skimmed the floating fat off with their hands, and smeared their hair with it, but would not drink the soup!' (p. 166). He also says (p. 171), 'Several wallabies were killed by the natives who accompanied us. Some of these people only eat male animals, others only the females. We were unable to learn the reason of this, but they so strictly adhere to the practice, that, it is said, hunger will not drive them to depart from it.' These statements about the native dislike to fat, and the eating of wallabies, are repeated by Davies (p. 414)."